COMMUNITY PLANNING ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

COMMUNITY PLANNING REVIEW

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REVUE CANADIENNE D'URBANISME

L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE D'URBANISME

COMMUNITY PLANNING REVIEW

REVUE CANADIENNE D'URBANISME

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COMMUNITY PLANNING ASSOCIATION OF CANADA

L'ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE D'URBANISME

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Montréal vu de l'île Ste-Hélène *Photo Henri Paul* **Ste-Hélène Island and downtown Montreal**

EDITORIAL NOTES

The idea of the green belt is not a new one. The attempt to provide a close contact between the man-made city and the countryside around it has been a constant preoccupation of philosophers and reformers. We are told that land laws of the Hebrews, the Romans and the Middle Ages were concerned with the balance of town and country. "And the cities shall they have to dwell in . . . and the pasture land of the cities shall be from the wall of the city and outwards a thousand cubits round about."

But in the new ways of life brought about by the Industrial Revolution, the intimate relationship of the town and its hinterland were upset. So when Ebenezer Howard in 1898 proclaimed his idea of a country belt around the town, this proposal had the look and feel of something entirely new; for what had been natural to other civilizations had to be formulated for the industrial age.

"Howard was the first to unite Plato's conception of the population-limit, More's principle of adjusting by short-distance migration the balance of population in urban areas, and the universal sentiment for a country setting for a town, into a clear formula . . ."[1]

Only five years after the publication of "Garden Cities of To-Morrow" the ideas formulated by Ebenezer Howard materialized into the beginnings of the town of Letchworth which is this year celebrating its Golden Jubilee and to which we would like to dedicate this number of our *Review* on the Green Belt.

As one could expect, the conceptions of Howard were refined in the process of building. While we may still accept his propositions, their applications must be shaped to fit our times and circumstances.

Howard's conception of the Green Belt was threefold:

To prevent the town from overspilling its natural (social and economic) boundaries; which brings up as a corollary the exclusion of ribbon development;

To prevent adjoining neighborhoods less skillfully planned, from invading the town's territory;

To secure for the town some of the amenities of the countryside.

Our four contributors have chosen to pursue the Green Belt idea from different points of view:

Mr. Gordon Culham believes that "Green Belt" is an abstract term that cannot be applied literally. The forces of growth within a city will always break the barrier of a surrounding belt and some kind of ribbon development seems to be inescapable. As the cost of buying land for a Green Belt is prohibitive, only that which is not amenable to urban development should be purchased and therefore we must have areas of Open Space, in lieu of a Green Belt. The idea of Conservation and the setting aside of River Valley Lands should be promoted.

Mr. Jean Issalys grants that our civilization of the machine requires new forms of urban structure; a cancerous growth on the periphery of the large or small community is unacceptable both socially and economically. A Green Belt can fix the urban perimeter, acting as a link between town and country. It may be the site of public institutions and playgrounds and should not be subdivided into less than five-acre lots. This would stabilize both urban and country estate values.

Mr. Claude Robillard quotes the comment of Alexis Carrel that "cities do not seem to have been built for the good of the inhabitants". Montreal sprawls on an Island but the River and its shore are not available for a green belt. Interior open spaces must therefore be the substitute. The Mountain at the core of the City and the parks and playgrounds in every neighbourhood must be developed.

Mr. Kenneth M. Mayall also feels that the term "Green Belt" is in need of clarification. To achieve this the author takes us through the hypothetical and actual green belts of London, England, St. Louis, Missouri, New York City and in particular Chicago and Detroit. After relating the failure of Toronto and the County of York in this realm, Mr. Mayall finds a saving grace in the accomplishment of Conservation Authorities in maintaining and developing green areas in Ontario.

Thus we have assembled in this *Review* the observations of some practical minds intent on some phase of implementation of the "Green Belt" concept. We have not raised here the question of the satellite town, as a corollary of confining the growth of cities. Though the two ideas are closely related in the philosophy of community planning, we believe that the urgent need for open spaces cannot wait upon public acceptance of the satellite principle. We trust that the reader will have increased his knowledge at least to the point of not mistaking, as a newspaper recently did, a golf course as "one green belt".

[1] Green-Belt Cities—F. J. Osborn, Faber and Faber Limited.

Notes de la Rédaction

Le concept de la ceinture de verdure n'est pas nouveau. Les tentatives pour établir un contact étroit entre la ville et la campagne qui l'entoure, se retracent au long de l'histoire chez les philosophes et les réformateurs. On trouve dans la loi des Hébreux, des Romains, du Moyen Age le soucis de l'équilibre entre la ville et la campagne. "Et ils auront des villes où ils habiteront . . . et les pâturages des villes s'étendront des murs de la ville vers l'extérieur de cent coudées tout autour".

Mais le nouveau mode de vie conséquent à la Révolution Industrielle a rompu le contact intime de la ville avec sa campagne. C'est pourquoi l'idée d'Ebenezer Howard, d'une ceinture de verdure autour de la ville, introduite en 1898, sembla d'abord et fut reçue comme une trouvaille; tant ce qui était tout naturel dans les civilisations antérieures était devenu matière à formule pour l'âge de l'industrie.

"Howard fut le premier a réunir dans une formule précise, l'idée d'une population controlée conçue par Platon, avec le principle de More, qui ajuste l'équilibre de la population dans la zone urbaine par une décantation à l'extérieur, et le sentiment universel d'une ville assise dans un site agreste".[1]

Cinq années seulement s'écoulèrent entre la publication de "Garden Cities of To-Morrow" et la mise en oeuvre des idées prêchées par Ebenezer Howard dans la ville de Letchworth qui fête cette année son 50ième anniversaire et à laquelle nous aimerions dédier ce numéro de notre revue consacré à la "Ceinture de Verdure".

Comme on pourait s'y attendre, la conception de Howard s'est affinée au contact de la réalité et même si nous acceptons sa proposition, il est normal de l'adapter à notre temps et aux circonstances.

Trois aspects caractérisent l'idée de ceinture de verdure chez Howard:

Empêcher la ville de déborder ses cadres naturels (sociaux et économiques); ce qui présume comme corollaire la proscription du développement linéaire;

Empêcher les parages non sagement développés d'envahir la ville;

Garantir à la ville quelques uns des agréments de la campagne.

Nos quatre collaborateurs ont choisi de pénétrer le concept de la ceinture verte par divers côtés:

Mr. Gordon Culham est d'opinion que "ceinture verte" est un terme abstrait qui ne peut pas s'appliquer à la lettre. Le dynamisme de croissance de la ville vers la périphérie trouvera toujours moyen de briser le mur de verdure et un développement linéaire est inévitable. D'autre part, comme le coût d'achat du terrain de la zone verte est inabordable, seul le sol impropre à l'urbanisation devrait être acquis ce qui nous donnera des zones de verdure sinon une ceinture verte. La promotion de mesure de Conservation et la mise à part des vallées où passe un cours d'eau est à encourager.

Mr. Jean Issalys veut bien que notre civilisation de la machine amène sa structure urbaine propre; mais la poussée cancéreuse au périmètre est inacceptable tant du point de vue social, qu'économique. Voilà où la ceinture de verdure peut limiter le périmètre urbain tout en faisant la liaison entre la ville et la campagne; site idéal pour les institutions publiques, les terrains de jeux, il ne devrait pas être morcelé en parcelles de moins de cinq acres.

Voila qui assurera la stabilité immobilière tant de la ville que de la campagne.

Mr. Claude Robillard cite le mot d'Alexis Carrel pour qui la ville semble "ne pas avoir été construite pour le bien de ses habitants". Montréal s'étend sur une île mais le fleuve et ses rives ne sont pas utilisables comme ceinture de verdure. On se voit donc forcé d'y substituer des zones vertes à l'intérieur. La Montagne au centre, parcs et terrains de jeux dans chaque quartier, voilà le mot d'ordre.

Mr. Kenneth M. Mayall lui aussi voudrait des éclaircissements sur le sens du concept "Ceinture Verte". Pour y arriver, l'auteur nous promène au travers des ceintures de verdures parfois hypothétiques, parfois réussies de villes comme Londres, Angleterre, St. Louis, Missouri, New-York et en particulier Chicago et Détroit. Après avoir exposé l'échec de Toronto et du Comté de York dans ce domaine, Mr. Mayall nous montre comment on s'est racheté grâce aux réussites des "Conservation Authorities" pour créer et maintenir des zones de verdure en Ontario.

Nous avons donc colligé dans ce numéro de la Revue la pensée de certains esprits pratiques occupés à la mise en oeuvre de certains aspects de l'idée de la ceinture de verdure. Nous n'avons pas soulevé ici la question des villes satellites comme corollaire au retranchement de la poussée urbaine. Malgré que ces deux idées soient intimement reliées dans la philosophie de l'urbaniste, nous avons cru que le besoin urgent de zones de verdure ne devait pas attendre l'acceptation par le public du principe des villes satellites.

Nous espérons que le lecteur aura pu augmenter ses connaissances au moins au point de ne pas prendre, comme l'écrivait un journal, un terrain de golf pour une ceinture verte.

[1] Green-Belt Cities—F. J. Osborn, Faber and Faber Limited.

Gordon Culham was born in Hamilton, Ontario; B.S.A. Toronto University, 1913; M.L.A. and City Planning, Harvard University, 1925, five years in Boston with Olmsted Brothers, planners. Planning Consultant to Guelph, London and area, Brantford and area, Simcoe, Brampton and area, Port Hope, Ingersoll, etc., Member National Capital Planning Committee.

GREEN BELT — Theory and Practice

It is high time for a reconsideration of the Green Belt within our philosophy and practice of community planning. In the development of planning theory the Green Belt has continually reappeared in various forms. In the attempts to put theory into practice there have been many different experiences.

In Ebenezer Howard's first statement of the Garden City idea, the chief goal was the marriage of town life and country life. As an integral part of each town site there was to be a surrounding belt of farm lands, limiting the extent of urban growth and providing a permanent association between town and country.

The possibility that the growth of a town could thus be limited was challenged by Patrick Geddes who recognized that a town was an organism in a continuous state of change. The past and present must be reviewed through the processes of analysis, synthesis and projection; planning, Geddes believed, should be a continuous and not a static process.

Then Sir Raymond Unwin urged that it was possible to limit the size of the central city of an urban region, providing for further growth by planning decentralized new towns linked to the central city by easy communication. In his conception the Green Belt was the whole green open space which formed the background to this constellation of central city and satellites.

It remained for Lewis Mumford to reinterpret the theories of his predecessors, bringing into their proper relationship the physical, social and economic factors that must govern the growth and planning of a whole region.

The conception of the Green Belt has made a deep impression upon those who practice community planning. The rapid growth of North American cities has re-emphasized the human need for accessible open spaces. But rather than trying to set a fixed limit to the growth of cities in the form of a green belt, there have been attempts to satisfy this need by seizing upon geographical opportunities, to rescue open spaces not specially suited for urban use. It has certainly been recognized that there are economic arguments against the endless extension of urban services and there are also valid objectives to the continuous encroachment upon agricultural land; yet in practice the only way to conserve open spaces has been by direct purchase. In this way one of the most controversial issues of land planning has been evaded. Little controversy is involved in the acquisition and regulation of land that possesses no value for urban development—such as the courses of rivers, the fringes of lakes and certain rough and swampy areas, etc. However, such a policy only has merit if the location of these lands provides a satisfactory distribution of open spaces within a regional scheme.

This attitude towards the provision of open spaces, as a substitute for a green belt, accepts the view that expediency is the guiding motive and that geographical accident rather than positive design must determine the form and extent of such open spaces. It is a politically acceptable attitude and, to some extent, gives recognition to the principle that there is a need for a reasonable proportion of open land required as a foil for the crowding of people and structures into urban concentrations.

APPLICATION OF THE GREEN BELT THEORY

On the American continent there have been two notable examples of the designing of open space as part of a town plan. At Radburn, New Jersey, the open space is woven into the residential fabric like a green ribbon. The residential "superblocks" are separated by this belt of interior open space which is of irregular shape, providing a dilution of the urban mass. On the other hand the Ebenezer Howard conception has been more closely followed in the three Green Belt towns. Here urban units have been transplanted into a rural environment; they are not however complete garden cities but residential satellites, depending upon larger centres for their employment and cultural arrangements. Other examples could be quoted. None however appear to justify the

title of "Green Belt"; in fact both theory and practice seem to have emphasized the use of open space for separating rather than for limiting urban growth.

It seems to me therefore that the only justification for the continued use of the term "Green Belt" is in its abstract sense, in reference to the generally recognized principle that open spaces have a humanizing value in the urban scheme of life. As soon as a Green Belt is proposed, literally, as a design form it has to be recognized as a completely impractical and absurd affair. Literally, to impose a belt of green space around a town requires such arbitrary action, with a purpose so thoroughly misunderstood, that the public will never support any such proposal.

For example, zoning plans have been made to show green belt zones composed partly of lands reserved for park purposes and partly of lands which are to be withheld until municipal services can be extended. To include the latter in a green belt zone is clearly a subterfuge, playing on mystery and confusion. There are better ways of doing this. On the other hand the public will support the reservation of land for parks because they know what parks are for. They will not accept this idea any more readily if they are called green belts instead of parks.

From ratty dump to open space.

Bronx River Parkway, Williamsbridge, New York City.

The fact is that Ebenezer Howard's theoretical Green Belt can only be applied to a new town and its surrounding farm land when the land has been purchased outright and brought under single ownership. But under normal circumstances the force of growth in a large city cannot be restrained by a barrier of farm lands. When the forces of growth strike out they are likely to find a way through such a barrier if it has no strength but that of municipal bylaws.

Some municipalities have used a green belt to define the economic limit for the extension of services. In this case the municipal authority simply displays a lack of confidence in the normal methods for resisting demands for costly installations. Why should the perfectly legitimate demand for open space be used to disguise action taken for an equally legitimate economic purpose? This is a perversion of the original conception of the Green Belt and only leads to public rejection of justifiable planning principles.

THE ARTERIAL THRUST OF GROWTH

Let us review the Green Belt as a feature of community planning. It has been expected that a Green Belt could be used by planners to perform the most Herculean task of limiting urban growth. Furthermore it is expected that the belt should lie across the paths of the most vigorous thrust of urban growth—the arterial spearhead. But in the path of this strong advancing column are we proposing to use an equally powerful opponent? No—just green farm fields, the perfect invitation to the developer and speculator!

The impelling forces of growth are encouraged to thrust out from the solid urban core, by natural inclination following the main channels of transportation, the highways and railways. Now, with the extension of bus lines, with better snow removal, with the reduction of distance on controlled-access highways these routes are even more attractive for business and residential development along the frontage. Rural municipalities encourage business and industrial development in order to strengthen their tax structure, and so this pulling out from the core is further accentuated.

The trend towards radial growth is today stronger than ever before. From the property owner's point of view it may be logical; and yet the resulting urban pattern is an endless, formless sprawl, costly to service, wasteful of the land's potential assets and thoughtless of human need for the most elementary forms of community organization. It almost seems as if ribbon development, that steady accumulation of shops and houses along our major thoroughfares, is here to stay, in spite of the violent protestations of planning theorists. Perhaps if we protested less and tried more to rationalize the problem, we might find that adversity is the mother of ingenuity.

Have we so far forgotten the past that it has no lessons for us today? The old pattern of the city, with towns, villages and hamlets radiating out from it left a

A frequent happening where a complete lack of control over built up areas produces a ribbon development along main highways.

Cas fréquent d'une absence totale de contrôle sur les surfaces bâties, particulièrement le long des axes de communication.

residue of open country between the urban units and on either side of the main arteries. This allowed people to live close to their work and to the open country, although in well organized communities. Employment was available in each community.

There was nothing intrinsically wrong with that urban pattern. The only objection to it today is our difficulty in preserving even a remnant of the open space. First the gaps between the units fill up and then the areas between the arteries are covered until there is a solid urban mass.

There are, however, methods of overcoming these difficulties. There is, for instance, a certain Toronto suburban township at present predominantly rural and content to remain so for some time. Previously this township had allowed a scattered development of homes on ½-acre lots. It is now their policy to favour building in hamlets and villages and to discourage scattering. This is achieved by requiring that in outlying locations building lots must have a frontage of at least 350 feet. Here is a realistic attempt to encourage community living in preference to scattered and ribbon development. A valuable principle has been recognized. It is a sound policy that people should be encouraged to live where community facilities have begun to nucleate. At the same time those who choose to settle in a more rural environment are not excluded from doing so. The choice is theirs.

It seems to me that if we can catch growth in the initial stages and nucleate it we may find that this will win public support. The connecting ribbon along the highway will at least have the illusion of spaciousness if lots are large enough while the space between arteries may be acquired or regulated to perpetuate the pattern. This is a pattern which is continuous rather than static and yet one which will satisfy all the physical, social and economic factors. This was Geddes' philosophy and to a large extent has been the objective of American planning. Otherwise we must find a stronger force than we have at present with which to oppose the pressures of radial growth.

THE PROVISION OF OPEN SPACE

We must strip from "Green Belt" some of its imaginary qualities and the abuses to which over-zealous planners have put it and relate what is left to some reasonable means of implementation. Our aim, then, is simply to provide a proper proportion of open space in relation with human welfare, part of which space we must acquire for public ownership and part of which we may hold by regulation.

The land that may be required for public ownership is likely to be in areas unsuitable for productive use, either for building or for agricultural purposes. This land is "open space" in the special sense that it is open for public enjoyment and recreation. Obviously it will be a small area in comparison with the larger extent of land that can be reserved for rural use and which is "open space"

in the sense that it is not covered with buildings. To be of the greatest value to future populations, both types of open space must be reserved well in advance of development, whether by acquisition or by regulation. Furthermore, if such open spaces are to form part of a plan for a regional scheme, a number of municipalities will be involved in the process of acquisition and regulation.

In Ontario the only effective means of implementing a plan within a municipality is by a zoning bylaw which must have the approval of the Municipal Board, after review at a public hearing. Such bylaws must be well publicized and the proposed regulations must be acceptable to the property owners concerned. The property owners' objectives increase in intensity, the more evidently they are excluded from opportunities of profitable sale. Acceptance of "open space" zoning cannot, therefore, be achieved easily. There is consequently an inclination to present such bylaws as interim devices, ostensibly intended to restrain too rapid development; it is argued that such a device is useful in order to conduct development in easy stages according to a sensible plan of municipal expenditure for services, etc. In many cases, however, it is the real intention of the planner to try and perpetuate this "open space" zoning. Many are content to have their true intentions implied rather than declared, because any permanent restraint upon the most profitable use of land can become a very bitter political issue.

It is not difficult to direct urban growth in accordance with a plan, providing local open spaces for each neighbourhood. But it is a very different matter to implement the Green Belt conception, placing permanent limitations on the density of development and reserving land for parks or rural use. When such a scheme is planned on a broad regional basis, as it must be, individual municipalities are not vitally interested and their legal advisors protest what appears to be confiscation of development rights. Most land owners are willing to accept a scheduled waiting period, until services catch up with building; but the opposition really gathers its forces at the first suggestion of permanently prohibiting the development of good land.

A distinction must be made between the withholding of rough lands and the withholding of good rural land.

A great deal of persuasion is required to convince owners of farm land that their property should be zoned for purely rural uses. However landowners may be willing to accept the exclusion of close-density subdivisions because they hear from many sources of the ruinous rise in taxes on farms where development is taking place. But farmers look over the fence and see their neighbours receiving fancy prices for their land and they are hard to convince. They know that, under stress, the provincial government will offer grants or some scheme for spreading industrial and commercial tax revenue over metropolitan areas and so relieve the burden on farm land. So it is simply wishful thinking to hope that farm owners will accept total exclusion of development. Therefore, if it is absolutely essential to exclude development or remove the reasonable expectations of profit, then the consequences must be faced: there should be some form of compensation, such as tax relief or damage allowances.

On the other hand the Municipal Act of Ontario does not provide statutory authority for excluding residential or commercial uses from rough land such as rocky, low-lying, marshy or unstable land where costs of services would be prohibitive. (The term "prohibitive" might be modified by adding "according to the local engineering authority".)

This clause of the Act has never been employed freely and yet it is one of our most valuable pieces of permissible legislation. It should be made more workable. The cost of running a boundary survey on the periphery would always be an obstacle to rural townships. If, however, some other authority paid this relatively small cost there would be less objection to employing this excellent means for holding rough lands.

In contemplating the use of river valleys as parts of a Green Belt we are likely to be attracted by the low costs of acquisition and the fact that low-lying ravine land is available for open space when all the adjoining high land has been built upon. In Ontario the River Valley Conservation Authorities, however, have been more positive in their approach. They have revealed the beauty of our river valleys that often contain the only remaining woodlands sheltered below the rim. With pollution under control the whole setting is ideal for open space and recreational uses.

River Valley Authorities have entered the field of land acquisition. Their rights to purchase under their permissive legislation do not recognize recreational purposes but the word *conservation* has very broad implications. I suppose it must be limited to the purposes set forth, namely flood control, pollution, erosion, etc. but it is conceivable that a further purpose could be added, namely "and where in any urban region it has been determined on an approved plan that certain lands are essential as open space for the welfare of the population".

It seems to me that we have here with slight modification satisfactory legislation to implement any regional scheme of Green Belt or Open Space in valley lands.

ENLISTING PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR THE GREEN BELT

In seeking public acceptance of planning regulations for obtaining open space, in the sense of low density development, we must recognize the vast difference between theory and its application.

There are certain generally accepted propositions

associated with town planning as a means of dealing with human problems. For instance it is recognized "that a sanitary sewage system is essential for the health of people living in close densities". The public accepts this proposition because it is accustomed to the idea, because health authorities have a certain prestige and because there is faith in the value of money spent on engineering projects as solution to problems. But even this proposition is sometimes contested by land developers who, in their anxiety to accomplish results, claim that there is no real proof that such installations are required in the interests of public health.

It must be conceded that the human need for open space and open densities is not related to the fear of epidemics or other obvious damage to public health. If we don't have open space, we do without it. It is true that in very crowded countries, such as England, the need has become urgent. But in Canada, with our huge areas of farm land and low population density, there is not the same evident urgency. A municipality is willing to buy a ball field or a park area within a town, but a municipal council will openly scoff at the fantastic proposal to acquire a green belt outside the town.

I believe that this attitude is largely due to a lack of promotion. Across the border, in New York, Ohio and Michigan, where densities are similar to ours, the human needs for public open spaces are fully recognized and vast programmes for their expansion are in progress. Canadians who have visited these American projects return with an entirely new attitude and some conviction that such undertakings would greatly benefit our people. I think they also recognize that our own extraordinary industrial urban expansion is now creating a new and urgent need for open spaces.

So it is possible that before we can expect to receive more popular support for the theory of the Green Belt we shall need more vigorous promotional activity. And although we lack tangible proof of the benefits to be obtained, we must nevertheless strive to proclaim our objectives to the people as clearly as possible.

As a statement of planning theory we may say that the Green Belt is intended to aid in maintaining that desirable balance between urban and rural conditions which is required for human welfare. The theory may be applied in different design forms. As long as the purpose is served, it is immaterial whether the open space takes the form, literally, of a belt in the European manner or whether it takes the form of wedges responding to the characteristic North American form of arterial thrust. The amount of green belt space that can be obtained will be determined, of course, by the funds available and by the willingness of land owners to accept reasonable regulations under our laws. Finally the objectives may be described as follows:

(1) To preserve and develop the amenities of a community.

(2) To encourage the nuclear form of urban development generally and residential development particularly.

(3) To provide lands for outdoor recreation of all kinds —within the city, on the margins and in the open country. There are new requirements for open space arising from shorter working hours, from the accelerated transportation by highway and private car and from the need to compensate the urban worker for the more mechanized and specialized occupations of modern industry and commerce.

(4) To provide a proportionate amount of open space as a relief from the oppressive spread of buildings over the large land areas of industrial cities.

(5) To provide for low density of land use as one of the varieties of living conditions and so add to the total spaciousness of urban land.

The bulldozer approach to Open Space.

Claude Robillard, Ing. P., est le directeur des parcs de la Ville de Montréal, administrateur d'un budget de $3 millions à distribuer sur 140 parcs, 111 terrains de jeu, 112 terrains de balle molle, 23 terrains de baseball, 18 piscines. Ecrivain distingué, son renom cependant tient de l'invention de "la Roulotte", scène portative qui promène d'un parc à l'autre, comédies, drames, musicales, farces, programmes qui font le délice des petits et des grands.

ASPHALTE ET CHLOROPHYLLE

Lorsqu'en septembre 1535 Jacques Cartier remonta le Saint-Laurent jusqu'aux "Rapides Lachine", il aperçut une montagne boisée qui s'élevait au-dessus d'une forêt de chênes, d'ormes et d'érables. La forêt a disparu, et sur l'emplacement d'un petit village d'Indiens Hurons, se dresse aujourd'hui une immense ville d'un million et demi d'habitants qui, non seulement a fait tache d'huile autour du Mont-Royal, mais s'étend au travers de l'île de Montréal sur une superficie de 50 milles carrés.

Le fait est là: Montréal, avec sa banlieue, est devenue la métropole du Canada, le centre financier, commercial et industriel du pays, le deuxième port en importance de l'Amérique du Nord.

Malheureusement, comme toutes les agglomérations urbaines, la ville de Montréal, à la fin du dix-neuvième et au début du vingtième siècle, s'est développée d'une manière incohérente et semble, elle aussi, selon le mot d'Alexis Carrel "ne pas avoir été construite pour le bien de ses habitants". Sous l'effet de la poussée industrielle, la population ouvrière s'est entassée dans des quartiers parfois insalubres, sans verdure et sans joie, où l'alcoolisme, la tuberculose et les maladies mentales exercent encore des ravages.

Heureusement, depuis une trentaine d'année, à Montréal comme ailleurs, on a compris l'urgence de réparer le mal déjà fait, et c'est ce à quoi travaillent le service d'urbanisme, ainsi que celui des parcs.

Il faut donner aux Montréalais les espaces verts qui leur manquent encore et qui sont pourtant indispensables à leur santé physique et morale. Il faut faire de Montréal une ville de plus en plus saine et aérée, où la verdure ne soit pas seulement l'apanage des quartiers dits "résidentiels".

L'idéal serait sans doute d'opérer un "décongestionnement" industriel, et d'établir dans la campagne voisine des Cités-Jardins selon les principes énoncés par Ebenezer Howard: une ville d'importance moyenne placée dans la verdure et centrée sur un industrie, mais protégée par une ceinture agricole. En ce qui nous concerne, rêve généreux de philosophe et de philanthrope!

Il n'a jamais été question, bien entendu, de morceler Montréal en Cités-Jardins à la Howard. La chose est impensable! La Métropole est située sur une île plutôt exigüe—170 milles carrés. D'autre part, les usines, les gares, la main d'oeuvre ne peuvent s'éloigner du port qui a toujours été le grand régulateur de l'économie montréalaise.

Il faut prendre Montréal comme elle est—une ville qui doit son importance croissante à sa situation géographique près du confluent de l'Outaouais et du Saint-Laurent, là même où le grand fleuve cesse d'être navigable aux transocéaniques.

Pas plus que la majorité des autres ville, Montréal n'est une création artificielle. C'est un tout vivant, qui est né et a grandi, à la manière d'une plante, au même rythme que le Canada. Le moment est venu précisément d'en contrôler la croissance et de corriger les déviations existantes, surtout celle qui a fait de certains quartiers de Montréal des masses de pierres ou de briques (taches grisâtres plus nombreuses peut-être dans d'autres grandes villes mais non moins déprimantes.) Il s'agit donc de donner à la métropole les espaces de verdure dont elle a encore absolument besoin. Mais le problème ainsi posé, quelle est la meilleure solution?

La topographie particulière de Montréal empêche d'établir une ceinture verte autour de l'agglomération, comme cela s'est pratiqué ailleurs, à Détroit par exemple. Le port en effet accapare presque toute l'étendue de 13 milles qu'occupe la ville sur les rives du Saint-Laurent, à l'est et au sud. Et c'est précisément en arrière du port sur une frange de 2 à 3 milles de large entre le fleuve et le Mont-Royal, que se sont groupés les principales industries, les quartiers du commerce et des affaires, ainsi que la majeure partie de la population.

Pourquoi, dès lors, ne pas établir des zones de verdure dans les secteurs nord et ouest de la Métropole? Cette région de Montréal est justement celle qui en a le moins besoin, à cause de la proximité de vastes espaces libres ou encore du voisinage des cités satellites de Westmount, Outremont, Mont-Royal, qui, par suite de leur caractère strictement résidentiel, ont pu faire une large part aux jardins publics et surtout privés. Par ailleurs, le principal inconvénient de ces zones de verdure à la périphérie serait leur éloignement du centre de la ville (une dizaine de milles dans certains cas) et leur situation près d'une des routes les plus encombrées de Montréal—celle des Laurentides. On a compté en une journée de 12 heures 15,000 véhicules de toutes sortes à l'intersection des rues University et Ste-Catherine. Le nombre des automobiles qui empruntent le Boulevard Décarie en direction du Nord durant une fin de semaine doit être plus considérable encore. Il en résulte des embouteillages fréquents dans un secteur assez mal desservi de surcroît par les moyens de transport en commun.

Heureusement, les Montréalais ne doivent pas accomplir de longue distance pour trouver un parc ou un terrain de jeux, car la nature elle-même semble avoir indiqué aux administrateurs municipaux la politique à suivre en ce qui concerne la répartition des espaces de verdure à travers la ville. Elle a fait en sorte que le Mont-Royal, avec son sommet boisé, se trouve placé au coeur de la Métropole et en devienne le signe distinctif, au même titre que le Pain de Sucre pour Rio de Janeiro. Le mot d'ordre est donc: de la verdure dans la ville, à défaut d'une ville dans la verdure.

La masse verte du Mont-Royal étant devenue nettement insuffisante pour les besoins des Montréalais, il faut introduire parmi la brique et l'asphalte de plus en plus de "terre vivante", comme disait le grand urbaniste Forestier. Il faut redonner à l'arbre la place importante, sinon primordiale, qu'il occupait sur l'île de Montréal il y a 400 ans. Les espaces verts—dont l'arbre est l'élément essentiel—ne doivent plus être le privilège des gens aisés qui s'établissent, dès qu'ils le peuvent, dans un quartier résidentiel où chaque maison est entourée d'un jardin, et qui, en outre, ont presque toujours les moyens de se payer des vacances à la campagne ou à la mer.

Tel n'est pas le cas des classes moyennes et ouvrières qui trop souvent habitent des zones domiciliaires encombrées, vétustes et manquant de verdure. Ce sont elles pourtant qui ont le plus besoin de chlorophylle, car l'espace vert, au sens strict du mot, est un espace vital. La feuille, avec sa chlorophylle, fabrique l'oxygène que nous respirons. Elle émet une certaine dose de vapeur d'eau, ce qui en été contribue à rafraîchir la température. Elle a un pouvoir élevé d'absorption de gaz carbonique et même de fixation de toxines.

Quand la végétation est suffisamment abondante, elle constitue enfin un écran protecteur contre la pollution industrielle de l'atmosphère, contre la quantité colossale de particules de fumées et de poussières qui se dégagent des usines, des gares, etc. et qui dans certaines grandes villes peuvent former une couche de "crasse" de plusieurs milles de hauteur.

Le fait est depuis longtemps admis par les urbanistes et les hygiénistes—les espaces verts (terrains de jeux compris) étant les poumons et les reins de la cité moderne, sont aussi nécessaires à l'économie urbaine que les systèmes d'aqueduc ou d'égouts.

Au même titre qu'une maison confortable et une nourriture saine, ils permettent au citadin, fortuné ou non, d'atteindre à la santé qui ne consiste pas seulement dans l'absence de maladie, mais, selon la définition donnée par l'Organisation mondiale de la santé, dans l'épanouissement physique, intellectuel et spirituel de l'individu et de la famille. Ils ménagent à une population surmenée une détente pour les nerfs, un refuge contre le bruit et les vapeurs d'essence. Ils répondent au désir inavoué de l'homme de la rue "de vivre malgré l'automobile" et aident à lutter contre la "détérioration mentale" (neurasthénies, etc.) qui, d'après Alexis Carrel, "est plus pernicieuse pour la civilisation que les maladies infectieuses". Doublés d'un terrain de jeux ils fournissent à la plupart des jeunes enfants de la ville le premier contact avec la nature, cette évasion au milieu des arbres et des fleurs qui est si enrichissante à tous points de vue.

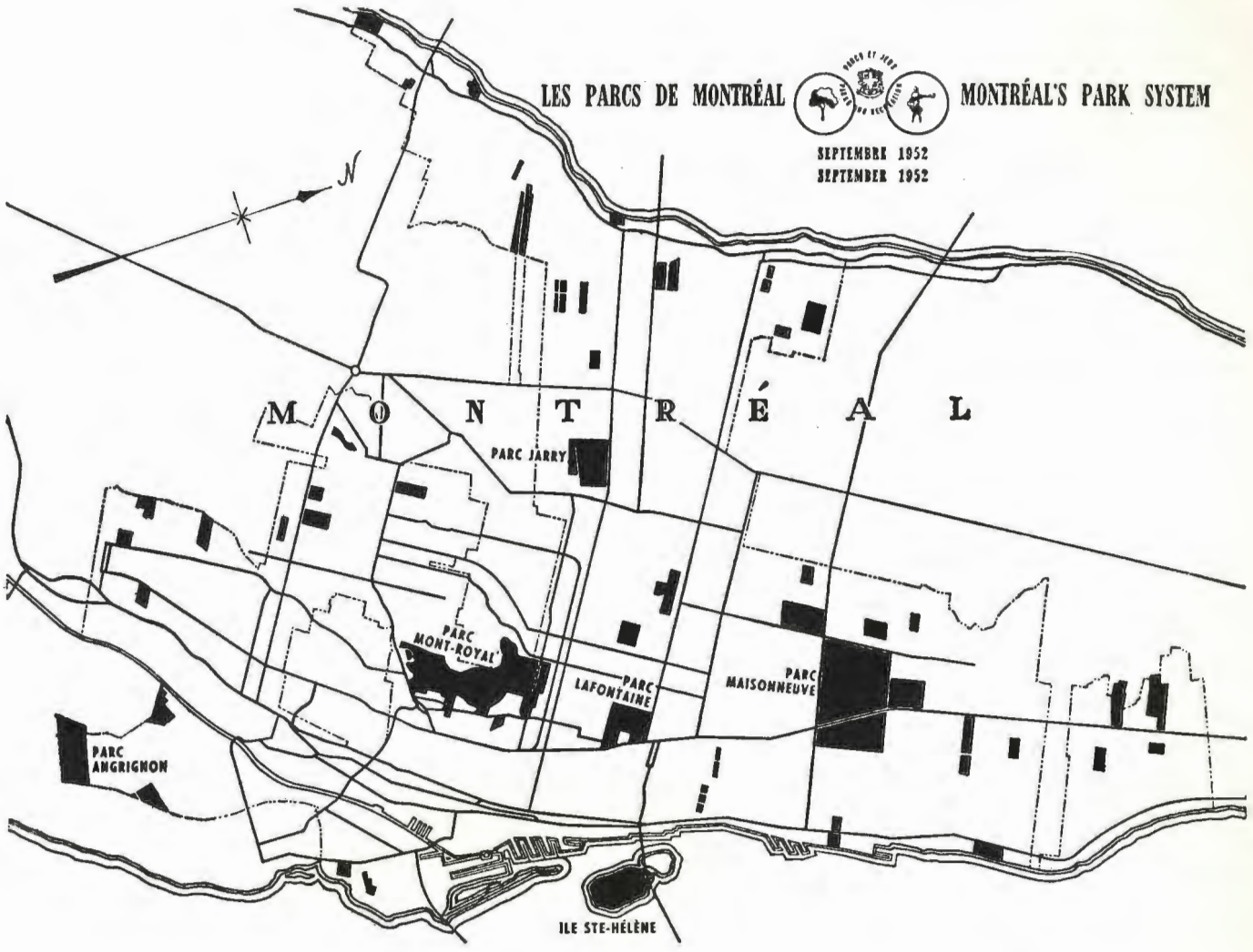
Bref, les espaces verts sont une des conditions essentielles de l'existence d'une cité harmonieuse et saine, mais, à notre avis, ils ne peuvent remplir ce rôle fondamental que s'ils sont mêlés à la ville et forment une trame aussi serrée que possible, en vue de répondre, dans chaque quartier, à une double exigence—régénération de l'atmosphère, et satisfaction des loisirs, surtout ceux des enfants.

Comme nous l'avons déjà dit, la ligne de conduite adoptée par la ville de Montréal et qu'elle entend suivre toujours davantage est de mettre les éléments de verdure et de récréation (parcs et terrains de jeux) à la portée et tous les Montréalais, et spécialement de ceux qui en ont le plus besoin, les classes ouvrières et moyennes qui habitent les zones les plus populeuses et parfois même des ilôts insalubres.

"De la verdure dans la ville! Des jeux dans les parcs!" voilà le double leitmotiv qui explique les réalisations déjà accomplies et jette de la lumière sur nos projets d'avenir.

En plus du Mont-Royal, la Métropole possède trois grands parcs urbains qui se trouvent au milieu ou en bordure de secteurs densément peuplés: le parc LaFontaine, le parc Maisonneuve et le parc Jarry.

A tout seigneur, tout honneur. Le parc Mont-Royal —en vieux français on disait Mont Réal—qui a donné son nom à la ville, est une réserve boisée de 494 acres, un vrai morceau de nature à peine disciplinée qui se prête merveilleusement au repos, à la lecture, à la promenade,



de même qu'à certains sports, comme l'équitation, le ski et le toboggan. D'une hauteur de 763 pieds, il offre un magnifique point de vue sur la métropole, le Saint-Laurent et la campagne voisine jusqu'aux Adirondacks. Si paradoxal que cela paraisse, il joue en outre un rôle éminemment culturel grâce aux "Concerts sous les étoiles" qui se donnent sur la terrasse près du chalet et aux représentations de théâtre qui ont lieu en plein air non loin du Lac aux Castors. Dessinés il y a près de cent ans par la grand paysagiste Frederick Law Olmsted, les plans d'aménagement de la "montagne" ne répondent plus aux besoins et les services municipaux étudient des projets d'améliorations en vue d'assurer un meilleur usage du Mont-Royal, sans rien lui enlever de sa beauté. Quand on pense que le Bois de Boulogne, près de Paris, est fréquenté certains jours, par 800,000 visiteurs! Loin de nous la pensée d'atteindre ce chiffre, mais il nous semble que les Montréalais ne profitent pas suffisamment de ce joyau de verdure que la nature a placé au milieu de leur ville.

Situé dans la partie est de Montréal, le parc Maisonneuve comprend un autre joyau universellement connu à travers le Canada et même à l'étranger—le Jardin botanique, qui durant la belle saison, est un enchantement pour les yeux et pour l'esprit. Centre d'enseignement et de renseignements, station expérimentale, école de la nature pour les jeunes avec ses jardinets d'écoliers, il est fréquenté chaque année par des dizaines de milliers de visiteurs.

De même qu'à l'ombre du Mont-Royal s'étend une vaste esplanade—le parc Jeanne-Mance—où garçons et filles peuvent s'adonner à tous les jeux et sports imaginables, ainsi le parc Maisonneuve est doté, à l'est du Jardin botanique, d'un vaste golf municipal de 27 trous, en attendant l'établissement au sud, d'un Centre sportif avec stade, piscines, restaurant, etc.

Le même mot d'ordre—"Des jeux dans les parcs"—a présidé au nouvel aménagement du parc LaFontaine où deux paisibles étangs et un kiosque à musique voisinent avec des terrains de baseball et des courts de tennis.

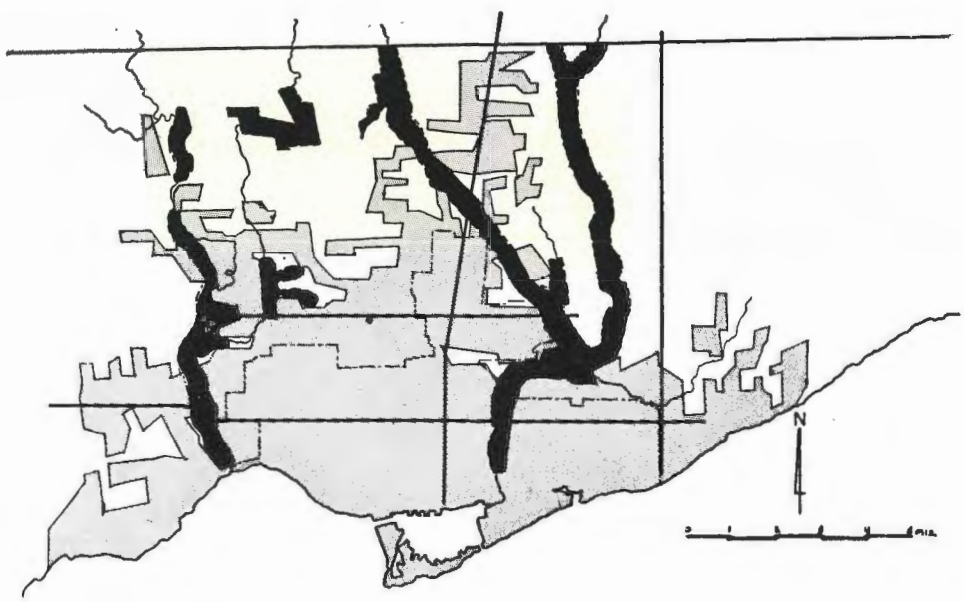
Quant au parc Jarry, remarquable par ses arbres splendides, il ressemble encore à un coin de campagne en pleine ville. Mais il sera bientôt l'un des plus beaux ilôts de verdure et de récréation de toute la Métropole. Les plans déjà approuvés prévoient en effet la construction prochaine de piscines en plein air et d'un centre communautaire qui comprendra une piscine intérieure, un gymnase, des salles de jeux et de réunion, une bibliothèque—sans oublier bien entendu, à l'extérieur, les terrains de sports, de jeux et de pique-niques.

Notre désir bien arrêté de répandre le plus possible "de verdure dans la ville" ne nous empêche pas d'en mettre à la périphérie. Bien au contraire. C'est ainsi que la Cité de Montréal a acquis, à l'extrême ouest de la Métropole, un beau domaine boisé qui est devenu le parc Angrignon. C'est ce qui explique aussi les efforts que nous déployons actuellement pour embellir et mettre en valeur un autre site pittoresque dont la nature a gratifié Montréal. Il s'agit de l'île Ste-Hélène, située au milieu de fleuve, en face du port. Grâce au pont Jacques-Cartier, son accès est assez facile, comme le prouvent les milliers de personnes qui vont se baigner dans les piscines en plein air qu'on y a inaugurées dernièrement. Du reste, depuis quelques années, l'île Sainte-Hélène est devenue un centre d'excursions hebdomadaires pour les enfants des terrains de jeux. Chaque été, à la clôture de la saison des vacances, on y organise un grand festival auquel prennent part de 30 à 40 mille enfants.

Les importants travaux d'améliorations entrepris dans les grands espaces verts de Montréal ne nous font pas oublier les autres parcs, "les petits, les obscurs, les sans grade". S'ils sont moins étendus, ils n'en sont pas moins utiles.

Les six parcs métropolitains occupant 1450 de nos 2850 acres d'espaces libres. Les autres sont au nombre de 140; ils ont donc en moyenne chacun une dizaine d'acres. Ils ne sont pas tous aménagés, mais c'est déjà quelque chose de les avoir, non seulement sur le papier, mais sur le terrain, même en friche, plutôt que d'espérer les obtenir un jour par l'acquisition et la démolition de pâtés de maisons. Bien distribués par toute la grande ville, ces parcs aideront à former des unités complètes dans la cité, des cellules vivantes parce que chacune vivifiés par un poumon de verdure.

Quand cette solution, vers laquelle Montréal s'achemine à grands pas, aura été atteinte, chaque Montréalais pourra dire, avec le grand urbaniste Forestier: "Je suis un vrai homme des villes. J'aime l'air libre et les jardins".



Toronto has no Green Belt, but River Valleys penetrating in the City offer a choice of Open Space to relieve the monotony of a huge built-up area.

Kenneth Mayall, M.A., Cambridge University, B.F.Sc., Toronto University, was responsible for the first Conservation Survey in Canada, completed in 1938 for King Township. With the National Research Council in 1940; since 1946, in charge of Park and Recreational Planning for the Conservation Branch of the Department of Planning and Development in Toronto.

CITIES AND GREEN AREAS

SOME COMMENTS ON AMERICAN GREEN BELTS

THE present confusion concerning Green Belt planning in Canada and the United States is magnified by the looseness of the term "Green Belt". Public acceptance of an idea is frequently necessary before it may be translated into action. It is therefore essential for the planners' language to be clear and concise. Size and scale differences are easily understood, those of function, less easily. Three examples may illustrate the variety of function of so-called Green Belts.

The first is, of course, the type of Green Belt planned for London, England. As expounded by Sir Patrick Abercrombie its functions were to be: limitation of further urban expansion into the Belt; natural growth permitted outside the Belt; and preservation of the Belt as chiefly agricultural land, (providing fresh foods and dairy produce to the city), but with recreation the primary use. These functions were, of course, conditioned by the almost unlimited agricultural 'hinterland' surrounding the London community, and the Belt was well described as an impact zone separating satellite towns from the main urban community. There appears to be no Green Belt of this scope on an officially accepted plan in the United States.

At the other end of the scale there are so-called Green Belts which are nothing more than narrow continuous rims of open space surrounding the central core of a city. These are commonly included in plans for redevelopment and reconstruction totally within built up areas. Their cost is astronomic. They scarcely separate or define communities, but serve locally for recreation and make an effective fire-wall in the event of a catastrophe. A typical plan for such a Green Belt lies in the office of the City Plan Commission for Saint Louis, Missouri. The area is 320 acres and the estimated acquisition cost is 24 million dollars.

Midway in both scale and function is the Green Belt which is a series of major parks connected by parkways, such as now surrounds or is planned to surround many cities. This is the general public's understanding of the term "Green Belt".

The responsibility for planning or failing to plan for Green Belts for the larger cities of the United States can hardly be placed on the City Planning Commissioners, whose work is almost invariably concentrated on the immediate and practical problems relating to city zoning, schools, sanitation, transit facilities, and urban playgrounds. In practice the type of modified Green Belt, the ring of major parks and playgrounds connected by parkways, that has been planned for many cities, has commonly been fostered by an unofficial agency.

New York City is a good example. There is no official metropolitan regional planning agency, and as a matter of policy there has been no planning of a Green Belt by the New York City Planning Commission. The authority to control land use was long since delegated by the States involved to the individual municipalities. The unofficial agency in this case is the Committee for a Regional Plan for New York which was organized in 1921 by various civic and business leaders. Supported to the tune of $1,300,000 by a benevolent Foundation, the Committee made its report in 1929. "A majority of the proposals of the Regional Plan has today been accomplished in less than half the time originally contemplated, in spite of a serious depression and a major war."[1]

These accomplishments, of course, include a metropolitan-wide system of regional parks and parkways but they include little or nothing of first class town planning designed to complement the Green Belt. Radburn, New Jersey, which was to be the prime example of this, with planned open space from garden to park, to parkway,

[1] F. P. Clark, "Planning Activities in the New York Metropolitan Region". Journal of the Town Planning Institute, February, 1950.

to green wedge, to Green Belt, was begun before the Regional Report was published and was not completed as planned. North of New York City the Westchester County Park and Parkways system, one of several in the Region, was initiated long before the Regional Plan was completed, but there was good co-ordination of the park and parkway projects with the recommendations of the Regional Plan as these were crystallized.

The most significant regional planning in the United States has until now been that concerned with natural resource conservation. The Tennessee Valley Authority and the Soil Conservation Districts are good examples. While the making (rather than the planning) of Green Belts on the English model and scale is not apparent in the United States, there are many examples of good planning of suburban and rural parklands with a lesser but definite function. Those of Chicago and Detroit are of particular interest. Both are unorthodox, the first as to function, the second as to speed of execution. (More typical but less interesting examples of good park development are those of the cities of Boston and Cleveland).

CHICAGO

The Cook County Forest Preserve District in suburban Chicago is probably the best example in the United States, of intelligent planning and use of land for recreation in the outskirts of a metropolitan area. The Forest preserves were conceived more than fifty years ago and were given considerable impetus in the City plan of 1909. Legislation creating the District as a taxing entity was passed in 1915. At that time the population for Greater Chicago was less than two million, and there was little thought of the Preserves as barriers between urban communities. The present population is about four and a half millions with three and a half millions in Chicago and one million in the suburban municipalities. Many areas surrounding the forests are now occupied by residential, business and industrial developments. The program of acquisition has been a continuous process. About forty thousand acres of forest preserves now interlace the suburban sections of Chicago.

The elongated park-like reservations have an almost complete continuity. The missing pieces are being gradually acquired and the narrower strips broadened. The program is limited by only two controls, total acreage (44,000), and bonded indebtedness (a generous limit of $27,000,000). Bonds outstanding in 1952 amounted to only $6,000,000.

There are two points of particular interest in the handling of this District. The first is that a system of broad parkways connecting each tract of woodland and providing a circuit within the forest was planned following the lead of the existing Westchester County Parkways in New York State. These parkways, which would have involved destruction of some of the forest and a huge annual maintenance cost were never constructed. Expressways now parallel much of the forest boundaries without taking up the District property. Accessibility is no problem, but the interiors of the woodlands are kept primitive and inviolate. There is a connected system of trails for riding, bicycling and walking within them but otherwise they are accessible only by walking.

The second point of interest is the bold and courageous adherence of the Board of Forest Preserve Commissioners to a specific policy concerning the function of the Forests. Over the years there have been hundreds of requests from organizations of many kinds for privileges allotting sites for special activities of a particular group, such as group camping, athletics and other regimented activities. Many municipalities have also petitioned the Commissioners for severance of Forest Preserve lands for public purposes, on the grounds that some of the lands are not intensively used. Ever since its inception the Board has wisely taken the position that it should not provide facilities for purely local populations, and has refused virtually all such requests.

Picnicking is the chief outdoor recreational activity in the area. Dozens of picnic centres are located on the borders of the preserves, and there are many riding trails and scattered facilities for winter sports, fishing and boating and golfing. Where buildings and equipment are needed these are severely simple, functional and unobtrusive.

The preservation or restoration of the forest is a major function of the District. The woodlands are never cut except in special-use areas, or to combat disease. Animal populations are allowed to fluctuate naturally. Although fishing is allowed, the entire District is a wildlife and wildflower sanctuary. The Board of Commissioners created in 1945 a Department of Conservation whose function is to conduct an extensive program of outdoor education, for the better enjoyment of the forests by the public.

Much of the development of the Forest Preserve District was carried out through Federal C.C.C. and other programs during the depression. As of 1952 the acquisition and maintenance program was being carried out through a corporate pegged annual levy of $1,600,000, and the construction and development program through a pegged annual levy of $600,000.

The Forest Preserve is of special interest to this writer in that it seems to violate some of the established academic canons of land use. Naturally the forests act between communities as a buffer in three and perhaps four dimensions. (Time is not of much account in a forest). But the holdings, with the city parks, are much larger than are generally thought necessary for the area and population served. Some of the District's lands are flat with deep and fertile soils which will support good crops.

No doubt these should be supplying great quantities of fresh vegetable products to the metropolis. The Forest Preserves in fact produce nothing but quiet and peace of mind. By all accounts there is a greater shortage of these commodities in Chicago than of food. It is perhaps more than a mere coincidence that this outstanding example of an antidote to city life lies in a great community known for its exceptional vitality and energy.

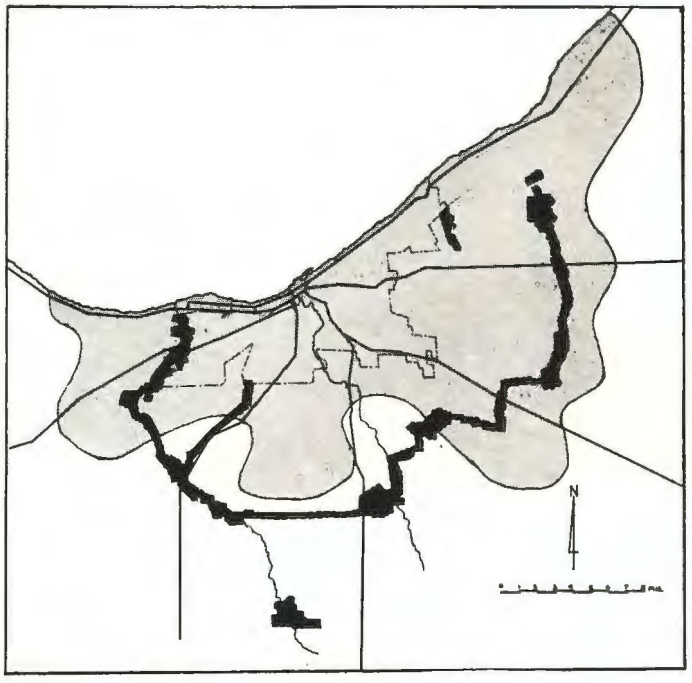
DETROIT

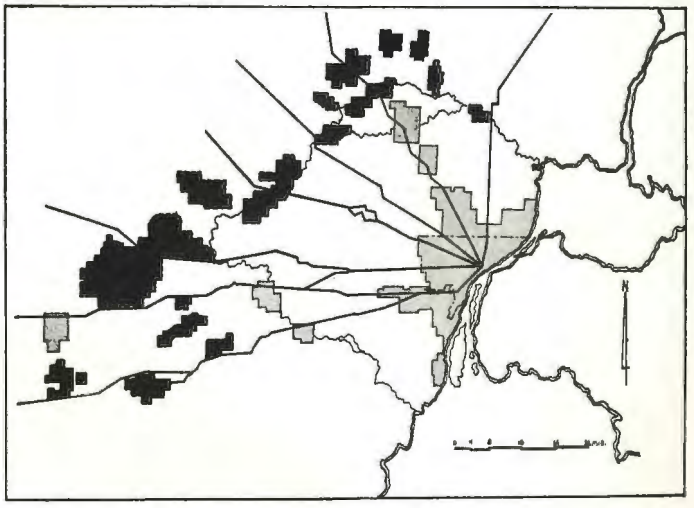
The shortage of public open spaces in and around the city of Detroit has long been known to planners. The first major attack on this shortage occurred in 1939, when an organization known as the Huron Clinton Authority was set up by an Enabling Act of the Michigan State legislature, for the express purpose of providing public recreation facilities. The voters of each county involved approved the creation of the Authority in 1940. The chief natural assets were two rivers (the Huron and the Clinton), the hills surrounding them, and the undeveloped sections of Lake St. Clair. The Master Plan of the Authority aimed particularly to preserve and improve these assets and to make them available to the public in the metropolitan area by extensive parkways and connecting drives.

In ten years five large parks, the largest being 4,000 acres and an extensive beach on Lake St. Clair had been acquired and developed. Excellent access roads have been constructed. The parks were extensively equipped with parking areas and facilities for many kinds of recreation activity. An artificial lake of 1,200 acres was formed in one of the parks, and several large docks and beaches constructed thereon. The section of the shore on Lake St. Clair was intensively developed with a wide sand strip, surfaced parking lots and well designed buildings with first class locker and other facilities for 6,000 persons. The accumulated cost of the projects by 1951 was approximately $9,000,000.

At the same time that this spectacular development was being carried out, the State of Michigan's Department of Conservation prepared a Master Plan, based on six years of careful surveys, for the acquisition of 100,000 acres of recreation land convenient to Detroit and the towns and cities which surround it. These lands lie within a radius of 30 to 50 miles from downtown Detroit, in a semicircular range of terminal moraine country. Some of the land consisted of abandoned farms. By the end of 1948 the state had appropriated $3,250,000 for this purpose, and had secured title to 37,000 acres of recreation land, over a third of its goal. Every area was bought without resorting to expropriation. In a single year about two million persons visited these recreation areas, although they were new and relatively unknown.

The cost of all these projects surrounding Detroit, (State and Metropolitan combined), during the last ten years, quite apart from urban parks and playgrounds, has amounted to about $13,000,000. To bring these figures home to Canadians they may be compared with Toronto's situation. Similar projects for the population of Greater Toronto, at the same cost per head, would involve an





The Green Belt in Detroit. The scale of the operation is to be noted.

The Green Belt in Cleveland

expenditure of four and a half million dollars. This amount can be seen in its proper perspective in the light of the failure of the City of Toronto and the County of York (in which Toronto lies) to reach agreement to find $150,000 for Green Belt purchases.

GREEN AREA PLANNING BY CONSERVATION AUTHORITIES IN ONTARIO

River Valley Conservation Authorities now exercise their particular powers and their educational influence over about one third of the area of Southern Ontario, encompassing a population of more than 1,750,000 persons.

While they have attracted widespread attention from the public and very favourable treatment from the press, they have long been a favourite target of Regional Planners. The general criticism most frequently heard seems to be that the many complex economic and geographic factors controlling land use and the development of human communities are no respecters of watershed boundaries, and that watersheds therefore are not practical as comprehensive planning units. It is further pointed out that a particular soil series and even a soil type may extend across several river valley systems giving rise to a homogeneous agricultural pattern related to the particular soil. Such patterns within a watershed may indeed be affected by the activities of a major focal point quite outside the watershed. The large number of relatively small rivers draining into Lakes Huron, Erie and Ontario, the shore line itself of the Great Lakes, and the many problems shared by groups of lakeshore and other communities, lend point to these attacks.

But all such arguments ignore the simple fact that the Conservation Authorities were set up primarily to deal with certain immediate and practical problems which happen to be common to watersheds and to have progressive effects within them, namely erosion, floods, pollution, water supply, and farm drainage: this one also particularly concerned with problems related to these but susceptible in a democratic country to more local treatment only, to wit soil fertility, field husbandry, and woodland management. The extent and direction of growth of urban communities are involved in natural resource conservation (mines excepted) only as they touch upon the above problems and upon two that intimately concern both town and country dweller, the provision of green belts and other public open spaces and the problem of transport.

The Conservation Branch of the Department of Planning and Development of Ontario was established in 1944 and was charged with organizing conservation work in Southern Ontario on the basis of drainage basins, with all the municipalities contained therein as equal partners. Conservation Authorities are established under the Conservation Authorities Act of 1947. The Act is administered by the provincial Department of Planning and Development, but the initiative in forming a Conservation Authority must come from municipalities within the watershed. Conservation Authority members consist of representatives appointed by each municipality involved, on a population basis.

Since the Authorities were not equipped to carry out extensive investigations indicating where and how conservation work might be carried out, the Conservation Branch of the provincial Department of Planning and Development has undertaken to carry out preliminary investigations as a service to the Authorities and to make detailed reports to them recommending the conservation measures needed. When the report has been presented the Authority must assume the responsiblity for initiating such of the schemes as it considers necessary and feasible.

Fifteen Authorities have already been organized in the province. The areas under the different Authorities vary from the smallest, about 80 square miles, to the largest (The Grand Valley Conservation Authority) about 2,700 square miles. The powers of the Authorities are necessarily wide, including the right to purchase and if necessary to expropriate land for any conservation "scheme", and "generally to do all such acts as are necessary for the due carrying out of any scheme".

The Conservation Authorities Act allows for the appointment of Advisory Boards whose membership is not limited to the Authority. This arrangement has both strengthened the Authorities' hands and improved their public relations.

Under the terms of the Conservation Authorities Act the costs of schemes and of their maintenance may be assessed against the benefiting municipalities. In practice many of the projects have also been supported by grants from the provincial government, and some flood control projects have also been assisted by the provincial government.

There are three chief purposes for which Conservation Authorities may acquire "green areas". The first is to develop or maintain land in forest or permanent grass cover. The primary objective may be the protection of headwater springs or swamps, to retard spring runoff, to prevent erosion, to increase the summer flow of rivers, or simply to establish that a forest or permanent grass cover is the proper economic crop for the soil type. Secondly, an Authority may acquire land specifically for park purposes. Its value may be primarily scenic, historic or of natural history interest, or it may have strategic value as a green area in relation to traffic arteries and the projected growth of urban communities. Lastly, green areas may be acquired as a by-product of flood control projects. These will include the fringes of land acquired for dam construction or river diversion, and also parts of storage basins themselves, since the full capacity of the basin may be needed only a few times in ten or twenty years.

The Conservation Authorities are still in their infancy, (their ages ranging from two years to seven). Flood control projects have naturally received the highest priority. Many of the land use projects involve long term planning. Nevertheless significant progress has already been made in both park and forest development.

A good example of reforestation by an Authority is the Ganaraska Forest. In the Ganaraska Watershed survey more than 20,000 acres were recommended for reforestation. The Province of Ontario agreed to pay half the cost of land purchase, the Conservation Authority paying the remainder. In this manner $50,000 has already been spent in the last five years. Much of the land has already been acquired and reforested. A few hilltops with spectacular views have been left unplanted, and some facilities for picnicking are already available.

Another project in which recreation and forestry are more closely integrated is the plan for development of The Pinery, an area of some 4,000 acres of oak and pine forest on sand dunes fronting Lake Huron. Much of the beach is not accessible, but other sections are already heavily used by local residents and by visitors from Sarnia (40 miles), London (60 miles) and from the American Ports of entry. Alternative plans were recommended to the Conservation Authority. The first recommended the acquisition and management of the whole forest by the Authority and the reforestation of some of the shifting sand dunes. An alternative plan recommended the passing of a Zoning By-Law[1] to control the development and use of the whole area by the township concerned and the acquisition and management of three sections of beach and woodland by the Conservation Authority.

The Thames Valley Park, developed by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority, is an example of land acquired as part of a flood control project. The park is only four miles from London, Ontario. There is a permanent artificial lake nearly five miles long. The conservation plans recommended the development of a multiple use park of 2,900 acres around and above the lake. The land has been acquired, beaches have been developed and large-scale facilities for picnicking, camping and other recreation are completed or under way. All of this work has been carried out by the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority. In this watershed open space surveys in the urban and suburban areas of London, Woodstock and Ingersoll have also been completed for the Conservation Authority. These were financed by the provincial Department of Planning and Development and will be used by the municipalities in zoning land use in each area.

For the Grand Valley Authority an intensive survey of recreation problems in the entire 2,600 square miles of that watershed was carried out in 1952. Analysis of the exhaustive facts uncovered by this survey should lead to standardization of open space surveys in Ontario. While the full report is not yet completed, the recommendations of the first priority are already being carried out. The first of these concerns the spectacular Elora Gorge, which lies within 25 miles of a population of 150,000. Four hundred acres have already been acquired and extensive developments are in process. Several other large-scale parks and a comprehensive network of roadside parks and picnic sites will no doubt be recommended. The control of land use of the river shores and of pollution of the river will also receive attention.

The Toronto area provides an example of the way in which watershed planning can extend the scope of urban and suburban planning for green areas. One of the responsibilities of the new Metropolitan Municipality of Toronto is that of establishing a comprehensive system of parklands to serve the Greater Toronto area. The kind of legacy which the new administration has received may be judged by the example of the town of Leaside, a new and thriving industrial and residential suburb which, with a population (in December, 1952) of 15,000, had less than one acre of parkland for each 1,000 inhabitants. The whole urban and suburban area, with a population of 1,130,000, has only 2.0 acres of public parks per thousand persons. The valleys of the Don and Humber form a complex system of deep ravines within the built-up area. These could be admirably adapted to the twin functions of supplying continuous parkland and of breaking up the residential and business areas into well defined separated neighbourhoods. Plans for a Green Belt have long since been drawn up by the Toronto and York Planning Board and its predecessors. Apart from the lakeshore, almost entirely built upon or privately owned for twenty miles on either side of Toronto, the areas suitable for parks lie, with few exceptions, in the valleys of the two rivers and astride a sandy moraine some twenty miles north of the city.

The Department of Planning and Development carried out a conservative survey of each watershed for the two Conservation Authorities. The two recreation surveys were carried out separately but with a regional approach and were integrated with the land use, forestry, hydraulics and wildlife surveys[1]. The following were among the recommendations made in the two reports:

1. Implementation (with minor additions) of the Green Belt plans already prepared.
2. The zoning of all Green Belt lands not in public hands, restricting their use to recreation where the lands could not be acquired immediately.

[1] Under Section 406 of the Municipal Act of Ontario.

[1] The Green Belt proposals were later summarized in one report presented to the two Authorities and the Planning Boards concerned.

3. Establishment of two Authority Forests including twenty-seven thousand acres, in the areas no longer suitable for agriculture.

4. Establishment of nine large parks outside the perimeter of the built-up area, five in the river valleys and four in the moraine country to the north.

The reports which also included recommendations concerning small roadside parks, picnic sites, and scenic drives and a summary of the pollution problem, are in effect working plans which can now be used jointly by the two Authorities and the Metropolitan Municipality. There is ample scope for action by all three organizations, since there is now not a single publicly owned rural park developed within thirty miles of Toronto.

No one can say with confidence exactly how much parkland is needed around an urban community. When the significance and use of every kind of existing resort and facility have been appraised the best estimate of the amount of lands needed is only a well informed guess. The application of mathematical standards does not appear to be practical. The requirements of land for urban and suburban recreation have been reported as low as 4 acres per 1,000 of urban population (the present goal in London, England) and as high as 12.5 per 1,000 (the present Chicago figure). In the existing shortage of parklands for almost every community in Southern Ontario the obvious solution seems to be to plan boldly with ample allowance for extension or curtailment which time and perhaps the St. Lawrence Waterway will determine. The Toronto example shows how adjoining Conservation Authorities can move together towards a common goal. To provide for a still closer union where this is needed, provision has been included in the Conservation Authorities Act for amalgamation of two or more contiguous watersheds under a single Authority. This provision has already been used, in the establishment of the Etobicoke-Mimico Conservation Authority. Other amalgamations are already being considered.

Naturally some of the facets of recreation and green area planning cannot be examined on a watershed basis. The control and use of the Great Lakes and beaches is the most obvious of these. But the ample and urgent reasons for other conservation planning by watersheds and the efficient machinery now set up for this form of planning and action, leave no valid excuse for ignoring recreation in a watershed plan, so long as the local problems are examined with a regional approach.

The parks and green areas now being developed by the Conservation Authorities are already subjected to intensive use. It will be a long time before the supply of facilities catches up with the present public demand, which is rapidly increasing. In theory public open spaces should be supplied according to public need rather than public demand. In practice public demand usually controls the purse-strings. The need is for open spaces which control and channel urban growth and also provide recreation areas. The demand is for recreation areas alone. The answer to this problem is public education, which happens to be a major activity of the Conservation Authorities. Those who decry the insularity of watershed planning are probably unaware that the Chief Conservation Engineer of Ontario is also (by election) the Chief Officer of each of the fifteen Authorities, and that a liaison officer works constantly between the field officers of the Authorities.

Community Planning on a far wider scale may eventually be accomplished in Southern Ontario, in response to public need and demand. If so, the plans supplied to Conservation Authorities will be found to be a vital part of that planning, and the work of the Conservation Authorities will form an essential contribution to the final effect.

Jean Issalys, architecte diplômé des Beaux-Arts de Montréal, a fait un stage d'étude en urbanisme à l'Institut d'Urbanisme de l'Université de Paris, et est attaché au service d'aménagement de la capitale nationale dupuis 1947. Nous devons à sa plume les croquis du présent numéro de la Revue.

AMENAGEMENT URBAIN ET CEINTURE VERTE

L'INCORPORATION de zones de verdure dans les agglomérations urbaines est un principe désormais reconnu de tous. La nécessité d'accorder à l'homme, outre les facteurs essentiels à son activité et à son habitat, l'élément naturel indispensable à son équilibre moral, ne lui est contesté par personne.

Si, à travers toute l'histoire de l'antiquité, depuis les Assyriens jusqu'aux temps modernes, le jardin n'a jamais perdu ses droits, il aura fallu néanmoins toute l'inhumanité de la révolution industrielle contemporaine pour nous en faire mesurer les vertus.

En supplantant peu à peu l'initiative individuelle en ordre dispersé pour y substituer l'organisation scientifique du travail, notre civilisation machiniste a entraîné des densités excessives de peuplement et suscité inévitablement des concentrations urbaines élevées. Dans la grande ville, cette concentration verticale aboutit au déséquilibre de la valeur foncière, tandis que pour la petite ville, l'expansion disproportionnée en surface grève les finances municipales en imposant des services devenus trop coûteux.

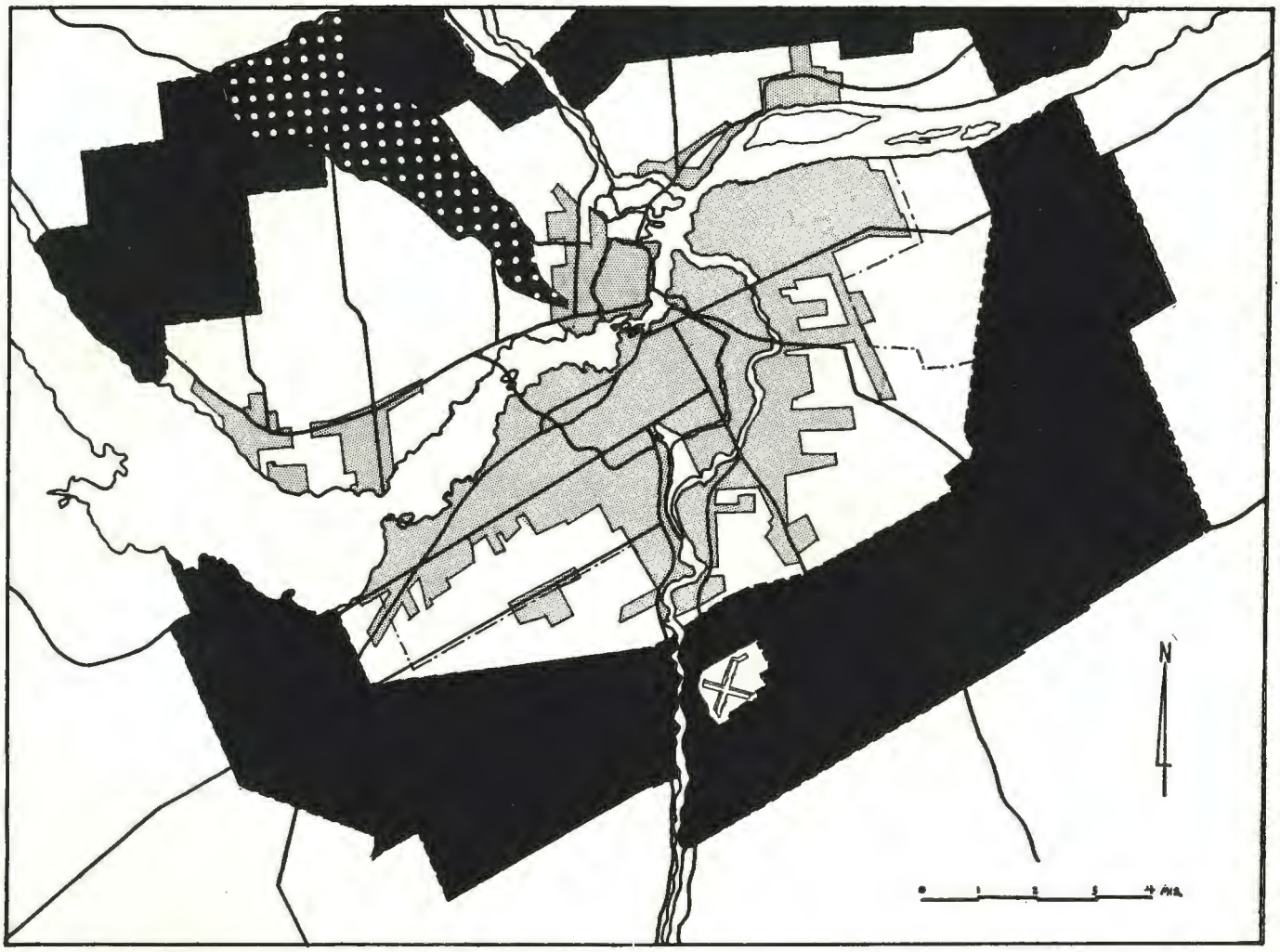
Par ailleurs, la carence totale de pouvoirs légaux en matière d'expropriation par zone et l'impossibilité d'effectuer dans certaines cas le remembrement des lots, rendent le tracé de nos agglomérations encore tributaire d'un parcellaire régional désuet. Ce manque de souplesse, cette schématisation des tracés anciens viennent à l'encontre des problèmes nouveaux que posent l'occupation du sol, l'implantation des bâtiments sur le terrain, les circulations automobile et piétonnière, les localisations industrielles, la distribution des écoles, et expliquent l'absence de concentration géographique de la plupart de nos sites urbains.

L'urbanisme contemporain, plus respecteux de la topographie, tente de redonner aux éléments esthétiques naturels la place qui leur revient d'honneur. Dans ce cadre d'un planning physique, la détermination judicieuse du périmètre d'agglomération et des zones vertes prennent toute leur signification et doivent s'intégrer aussi naturellement que possible dans le site urbain.

* * *

Si la civilisation de la machine exige des structures urbaines nouvelles, nous sommes loin de compte devant l'aspect navrant que nous offre, en général, les zones périphériques de nos agglomérations. Il est d'usage d'y découvrir en effet un assemblage hétéroclite de maisonnettes, d'entrepôts, de postes d'essence, d'entreprises industrielles, de dépôts à ciel ouvert, de panneaux publicitaires, le tout généralement cristallisé le long d'un axe de circulation. M. Mayer-Heine en définissait pertinemment le diagnostic dans les termes suivants: "Cette asphyxie d'un tissu trop lâche à la périphérie est souvent doublée de la congestion d'un centre surencombré et c'est le développement anarchique d'un organisme exubérant dont la prolifération va croissant de plus en plus rapidement pour apparaître comme totalement désordonnée. Il en résulte un étirement du périmètre d'agglomération et une dispersion qui rendent impossible pour les finances municipales un entretien du réseau viaire". Le budget municipal s'épuise ainsi dans la réalisation d'opérations fragmentaires, souvent désordonnées, et dont les buts sans liaison à une politique d'ensemble, deviennent rapidement ruineux pour la collectivité.

Cette lente dissociation du corps urbain est aussi valable à l'échelon de la petite ville qu'à l'échelon de la métropole. En regard des possibilités éventuelles d'expansion, la délimitation du périmètre d'agglomération constitue la première étape sérieuse à franchir pour arrêter la lèpre de nos banlieues. Au delà de cette limite bâtie pourra s'étendre une zone verte à affectation spéciale qui formera à proprement parler la ceinture verte. Cette zone de verdure, sous contrôle strict, mais d'où toute utilisation n'est pas exclue, permet en fait une zone de transition, de la zone urbaine à la zone rurale.



OTTAWA. Autour de la limite du périmètre d'agglomération de la capitale s'étendra une zone de protection rurale, ou ceinture verte, qui pourra recevoir les établissements agricoles, les grandes propriétés privées et les services publics exigeant un environnement de verdure et de calme. A noter la pénétration du Parc National jusqu'au coeur de la ville.

Around the built up area will spread a green belt where farms, large private properties and public services in need of light and calm may be allowed. Note the penetration of the National Park to very near the heart of the city.

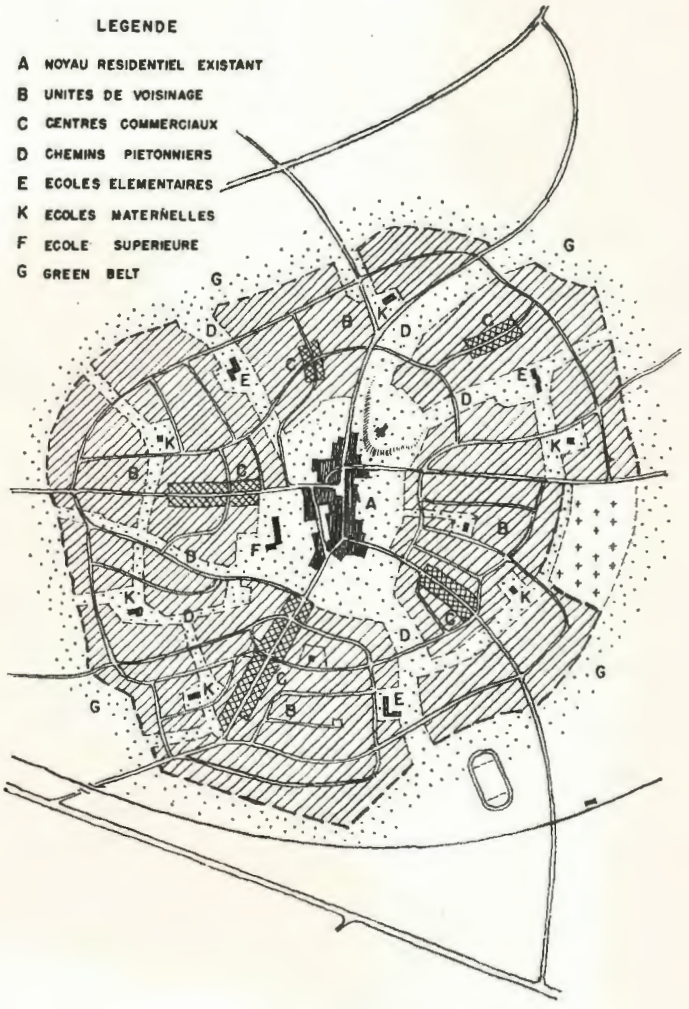
Dans l'esprit de l'opinion publique le "green belt" est plutôt considéré comme un no man's land improductif dont le seul but est d'assurer un écran de verdure suffisant autour de la ville. De fait, le "Green Belt area" a pour objet de fixer précisément le périmètre urbain et surtout de contrôler tout développement abusif qui risquerait de compromettre l'accroissement progressif de la surface bâtie. Une de ses fonctions protectrices porte principalement sur le contrôle absolu de tout développement linéaire le long des routes d'accès vers la ville. Ce facteur, garant d'un service industriel adéquat, d'une circulation aisée, de la sécurité des habitants, conditionne tout nouveau développement rationnel et réduira toute poussée tentaculaire des faubourgs le long des axes de communication.

Ce but ne peut être atteint que si on bannit tout lotissement résidentiel de la zone verte; d'abord en raison des charges trop élevées que les services entraînent pour la municipalité, ensuite afin d'assurer aux quartiers périphériques une densité graduellement décroissante en se rapprochant de la zone rurale.

Loin de constituer une zone "gelée", la ceinture verte constitue donc plutôt une zone de transition offrant des possibilités d'exploitation agricole et maraîchère, l'établissement d'institutions publiques, hôpitaux, collèges, écoles, services d'état. On peut naturellement y aménager en outre des terrains de récréation et d'amusement, clubs de golf, centres d'athlétisme et cimetières. Les propriétés rurales d'au moins cinq arpents de superficie y peuvent être admises ainsi que tous les établissements de fermage nécessaires à l'exploitation agricole.

LETCHWORTH. La ville d'Ebenezer Howard! elle fête son 50e anniversaire.

This year is the 50th Anniversary of the town of Ebenezer Howard.



L'aménagement d'un village suisse: unités de voisinage entourées d'une ceinture verte.

Planning of a Swiss Village: neighborhood units surrounded by a green belt.

Considérée comme zone éventuelle d'extension, la zone verte offre donc des réserves de terrain pour l'avenir et permet de parer aux besoins ultérieurs entraînés par un accorissement de densité. Dans une déclaration récente à la presse, M. Jacques Gréber, concluait incidemment à ce sujet: "It is then easy to realize that the so-called 'Green Belt' is not a heavy and costly burden to the city, arbitrarily encircling it and depriving it of any relationship with the outside region, but rather composed within it. With all the facilities given to its normal and functional use it can be a vital and efficient factor for the mutual protection of the urban and the rural communities, protect their amenities and enhance and stabilize their respective real estate values".

Si tout celà semble hypothétique et d'une réalisation lointaine, il n'en faut pas moins établir la structure par avance, pendant qu'il en est encore temps, avant que la spéculation n'y voit un profit immédiat et ne s'en empare. Il y a toujours lieu de prévoir tôt si on ne veut pas corriger plus tard, et à grands frais, le désordre établi.

La création des espaces libres nécessite de prévoir grand dans la conception de l'armature d'un projet d'aménagement; sinon les timidités et les hésitations se révèlent par la suite d'autant plus coûteuses.

BOOK REVIEWS

WHY NOT HIGH-RISE RENTAL HOUSING?

HOUSING AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE. By Anthony F. C. Wallace. A preliminary survey, with particular reference to multi-storey, low-rent, public housing projects. Reproduced by the Philadelphia Housing Authority, 1952. 126 p. Processed.

In the spring of 1951 the Philadelphia Housing Authority had arranged for a program of low rental housing; but they could not proceed to build within their budget upon the sites available, unless they took the unprecedented (for them) step of erecting high-rise buildings for families of low income. Before deciding to do so, they engaged a social anthropologist from the University of Pennsylvania to "study the human problems involved in the use of elevator apartments". The result is a landmark in the objective and precise examination of this thorny question.

Dr. Wallace began by looking into the extensive literature. But he found little help here, for "ninety-nine percent of it is composed only of the warmly-held opinions of thousands of experts". He found no ready-made framework of method for what he had to do; so he has set out his own "model" of the social goals at which the Authority might aim, and the relationships to these of the location, design and management decisions under their control. He was able only briefly to test these hypotheses in high-rise and low-rise projects; and finally he outlines suggested amplifications of this initial study. Throughout his concern is for the 'nuclear' family, consisting of two parents and one or more dependents; other conclusions may be appropriate with respect to the minority of households of other kinds.

He points out that the Authority, in referring its problems to a social scientist, implied a principle that deserves to be made explicit: "*The ultimate aim of a public housing authority is not the construction of dwelling units, but to the improvement of physical, social and emotional well-being of certain citizens, by means of safer and more sanitary housing in a more desirable social environment than these citizens now occupy*" (Emphasis his).

It boils down to this: what are desirable standards of personal health, family and community arrangements in Philadelphia in the 1950's, and what sort of accommodation will contribute most to attaining those standards? Wallace presumes that a public housing project must by its nature be a 'new community' (i.e. a group in face-to-face association), in which the aims are to secure certain conditions of:

(1) individual health (physical and mental)
(2) family structure
(3) community structure.

The Authority, in planning a new community with its own new culture, can influence that new social development by its choices in these matters:

(1) site selection
(2) population size (of the project)
(3) density
(4) physical design (of everything built or installed)
(5) tenant selection
(6) management.

Wallace gives further definition and illustration of the interplay of the 'aim-variables' and 'control-variables', and draws from his observations a series of 44 hypotheses which I shall try to summarize as follows:

Site Selection: Projects of different types will differ somewhat in social structure. Remoteness from essential outside facilities, or a gap in social status between project and surrounding families, will make for tensions within and between project families, and for slighter links with families just outside project limits. A squarish plot shape helps project integration.

Population size and density: The best kind of relationships between tenants are unlikely if they number more than 1500 people. Densities not above twenty units per gross acre are desired, because higher densities deprive the families either of private yards or usable public open space. Also, higher densities take a toll of personal energy spent in adjusting to unintended social contacts (halls, elevators, footpaths) or monotonous physical stimuli(noise etc.), or both. Tenants seem better satisfied if their dwellings open on to the ground.

Physical design: Circles of friendship in a project tend to grow as individuals meet one another unintentionally; too-close sharing of space with only one neighbour and too-great 'functional distance' from others will make for tension, rather than wide friendship. The chances for accidental encounter while gardening, parking the car, taking the garbage, count for more here than the certainty of encounters to be expected in the Bendix room, the tot-lot, the project office. The designer of the site plan brings tenants together in their daily movements around their own dwellings perhaps in unrelieved pairs or trios, but preferably in chain-link patterns. The family may pull apart if there is not enough space *inside* the house for individuals to pursue these and other friendships. The family lacking its own space *outside* its house not only tends to pull apart, but fits less well into the community, because the father (who thus becomes merely a 'lodger with sexual privileges') too rarely meets his neighbour fathers. The public housing project cannot be integrated completely into the society around it, although placing the project's communal installations near its edge and letting non-tenants share them will help.

Tenant Selection: The narrower the bank of families eligible as tenants, the less articulate and typical of its town the project will be. The picking of families in

need is bound to draw into the project some disturbed personalities; in higher density projects these persons can cause more difficulty. Asking every family to vacate when it attains a stated income level may rob the project-society of its leaders, making the remainder more dependent upon the management for guidance. In any case the manager plays something of the role of father to tenants; he has fairly constant expectations of them, they have varying ones of him. He should make clear the limits of what he is ready to do for them, yet keep aware of what is hoped of him.

And finally, Hypothesis 44: "The measures which management should take to promote a real tenant community are:

(a) provide a maximum of facilities which encourage social growth, and a minimum of direct services;
(b) encourage and reward those tenant leaders who are already informal leaders in the community;
(c) encourage and give some financial powers and administrative authority to a tenant governing body with both responsibility and power to exercise social control over certain aspects of community life;
(d) encourage the community within certain limits to define its own norms of behavior;
(e) declare clearly and publicly its own role;
(f) be responsive to real, and often changing, community needs".

Putting these hypotheses another way, Wallace says that "optimal conditions of individual health, family structure and community organization . . . will be facilitated, other things being equal" by a project with the following qualifications:

I Total population no greater than 1500 persons;
II Low density (say, less than twenty dwellings per acre);
III Private porch and yard for each family unit, to be cared for by tenant;
IV Community tenant leadership not continually purged by making over-income families vacate;
V Policy of limiting management's role to clearly defined matters, and promoting maximum democratic community self-control.

The case against public low-rental apartments is summed up: they tend to have more than 1500 persons (to keep management cost per tenant down); they tend to high densities (also to save money); private yards are impossible, and balconies are not adequate substitutes (for size, possible use or neighbour-contact); management-controlled areas are greatly increased (all open space, halls, elevators, stairs, tot-lots and the like).

In conclusion, Dr. Wallace insists that these are his thoughts about the problem preliminary to thoroughgoing and purposeful years of testing and modifying these intuitions, speculations or 'spawned ideas', until they become a more adequate body of housing theory. His three months of hypothesizing must have been very busy and intensive ones; he claims no knowledge of housing at the beginning, at the end he develops the outlines of a comprehensive theory of housing design and management.

Further than that, he discusses in general terms the limited usefulness to housing research of the attitude questionnaire; and of the 'brass-instruments' manipulation of abstracted, measurable, statistical quantities. A careful reading of these few paragraphs will give our 'operational' people in housing greater sympathy with the reluctance of the serious student of society to promise them cut-and-dried remedies for their daily worries. Equally valuable, for the social scientist (and we have many in Canada) who is confident in describing an observed social structure, but utterly at a loss to suggest how it might accommodate to particular changes in the conditions bearing upon it, Wallace suggests a procedure.

This consists of a first reconnaissance of the phenomenon and the opinions of other observers about it, and an attempt to define the variables and their relationships, including variables not originally asked about. Next, draw up a systematic ethnograph of a social group displaying the phenomena in question, (using the usual kind of descriptions under such headings as family, law and government, ethics and religion, shelter, food, clothing—almost as if for some Polynesian community). The second step may serve to modify the ideas about relationship formed in the first reconnaissance: more important, the ethnograph may well reveal other influential variables not thought about at first (e.g. the altering role of management as the form of building varies). Now a large set of statements can be made of the kind: 'if this and that condition prevails as to these variables, the condition of yonder variable will be thus'. The student tries each such statement in actual cases; each hypothesis is justified if it regularly fits observed instances tolerably. The accumulation of such proven relationships would be a great help to people in housing.

In the last few of his solidly-packed pages, Wallace points the way to the use of this kind of technique in the prediction of the qualities of a project (or other community) in terms of its total population, the density of development, the provision of space outside the dwelling for the sole use of the family in it (or whatever satisfactory substitute facility is found for this), the appropriate degree and fields of tenant self-government, and the qualifications, attitudes and behaviour which characterize good housing management. The study ends with a bibliography of five and a half pages.

In various places, Dr. Wallace has harsh things to say about the vast body of housing literature in English. He earns more than forgiveness by blazing, single-handedly and with modest rations of time and writing, a new trail toward the goals of policy-makers and policy-executors in public housing. ALAN H. ARMSTRONG

URBAN REDEVELOPMENT STUDY (1948-51)

THE FUTURE OF CITIES AND URBAN REDEVELOPMENT; URBAN REDEVELOPMENT; PROBLEMS AND PRACTICES. Director, Coleman Woodbury. The University of Chicago Press, 1953.

There is something inherently wrong in attempting to evaluate after a few weeks' study a work of such vast scope as the *Urban Redevelopment Study*. For these volumes were clearly intended as reference works, to be used, when pertinent, as instruments for the work of public officials, as a spark to civic leaders, as a guide to investors in redevelopment projects, and as a stimulus to students of urban development. As such, the Study can meet its fair test only over time in its service to these different groups of people.

With this qualification in mind an attempt will be made to gauge the usefulness of the work from the viewpoint of the practising planner.

"Urban redevelopment" has been defined by the Study as "those policies, measures and activities that would do away with the major forms of physical blight in cities and bring about changes in urban structure and institutions contributing to a favorable environment for a healthy civic, economic, and social life for all urban dwellers". Thus the proper study of urban redevelopment involves (a) a search for significant values or goals, (b) an analysis of the underlying forces creating the need for urban redevelopment, and (c) an exposition of the technical problems—of law, economics, design and human behaviour—arising out of the process of redevelopment itself. This division of the subject matter has in fact guided the organization of the text with the first two divisions contained in one volume, and the third in the volume on *Problems and Practices.*

The task of defining the philosophy of redevelopment has been assigned to a particularly sensitive and farseeing group of people. In many ways they sound like the informed conscience of America. "Elevate man," writes G. Holmes Perkins, "rather than money or machines to a position of dominance . . . and a balanced life would become the goal". Henry Churchill warns against the dangers of an "urban feudalism" based on "the ownership and control of shelter" by a few big landlords and inherently biased against the individual. Robert C. Weinberg believes that "all features of the physical environment should be thought of from the point of view of the people who will most frequently look at them . . . the man in the street or the woman in the window". Vernon de Mars makes "a plea for greater knowledge of people's needs and desires on the part of planners and architects". And Coleman Woodbury, with painstaking care, sets out to establish that the shaping of "the pattern of the physical neighborhood and city" in accordance with "the needs and cravings of the human personality" is in itself the basis of the high civic morale necessary to inspire the urban community towards the attainment of urban redevelopment.

It is encouraging that these philosophers of planning (and that includes Catherine Bauer and Arthur B. Gallion) should so vigorously proclaim the humanist tradition of Jefferson, Emerson and Whitman. There is no attempt to evolve formulas—simply the advice to look honestly at man and his needs first. I believe the Study made a wise decision in giving this discussion of values such prominence; particularly, because in the practice of planning one is so often preoccupied with the *instruments* of our work, and the pressure of events affords little opportunity for the formulation of objectives and a questioning of assumptions. And yet it is the philosophy of planning which gives direction, and breathes life into the planning movement and process.

The most thought-provoking material on "goals, design and strategy" was found in the contributions by the accomplished critic of housing and planning, Catherine Bauer, and by Arthur B. Gallion, Dean of the School of Architecture at the University of Southern California.

Miss Bauer's central idea is that the slum clearance objective has its origin in the depression of the thirties when, due to doubling up, the vacancy rate in slum areas was high and public investment in clearance and reconstruction was a desirable counter-depression measure fitting in with national policies. "But", says Miss Bauer, "now every one of these conditions is reversed . . . slums are full and profitable . . . defense requirements are serious obstacles . . . any former argument for a vast program of civic betterment geared almost exclusively to clearance operations is immeasurably weakened". With Miss Bauer's ensuing plea for a regional scope of housing, planning and community development, including redevelopment, I can heartily agree. But her central idea demands an answer.

A recent issue of *Time* magazine described, in the style of its somewhat brutal journalism, a struggle against Chicago's "23 square miles of crawling, crumbling slums . . . in which . . . amid the sagging stairways, falling ceilings and overflowing toilets, reporters discovered one child who had been nicknamed "Pig Face" after a rat bit off his nose". What shall we say to the parents of this child? That they must wait until the next depression to clear out the rats? My point is that the redevelopment of blighted areas cannot be considered primarily as a contra-cyclical economic policy because the human toll of slums is too great and their effect on the urban structure, too destructive. It is true that in a period of high investment, characterized by large defence outlays, unduly high public investment may aggravate inflationary tendencies. But this problem confronts the people of a democracy with a choice rather than an insuperable obstacle—the kind of choice that was made by the reservation of $1,000,000,000 for

slum clearance and redevelopment in the *U.S. Housing Act of 1949*. When the threat of inflation stands in the way of necessary public investments there remains the alternative of diverting capital resources from less urgent uses. It may be argued that the circumstances of 1953 do not call for abandonment of the slum clearance and redevelopment objective, but rather for redoubled efforts to make that particular need felt amongst all the competing demands impinging upon a democratic government.

My second observation is that urban redevelopment needs to be considered in relation to the evolution of particular urban areas. For example, where a basic planning objective (and struggle) is to attain an optimum physical limit to the regional centre, urban redevelopment may become the major preoccupation when the city demands associated with physical growth have abated. As the optimum of the Centre is approached and population is successfully distributed throughout the region, the quantitative demands will decline (i.e. the demand for roads and sewer and water lines in new areas), and the urban organism will accumulate capital (or credit) which could be devoted to qualitative investment—the improvement of conditions in the older areas through redevelopment.

The central theme of Mr. Gallion's essay on *Civic Design and Democracy* is that blight is the result of inadequate "standards for urban land use and development" and that civic design, which is "the relation between all the projects . . . that make the city", will improve only by the proper use of democratic power to implement by law, "decent standards of maintenance". There is something of real value in this emphasis. It is not the occasional brilliant development that will fundamentally alter the quality of our environment, but rather the proper control of the multitude of small, day-to-day land-use decisions which cumulatively shape the urban environment.

While Mr. Gallion's prescription has much merit, one wonders whether the spread of blight can be avoided without a positive program based on an understanding of the land use movements which underlie decay. What, for example, can tough building and zoning regulations do to prevent the spreading blight just beyond the central business district of your town, in the zone of transition, where original expectations for more intensive and profitable land use have not been realized? Or what can high "standards of maintenance" now do to arrest the trend to decentralization—the flight of residents from unwholesome conditions and of wholesale and industrial use from near-centre to the periphery? These questions are raised, rhetorically, to suggest that the creation of viable cities requires, simultaneously with the proper control of new areas, a program to eliminate the physical presence of past errors—and that this can be done best by knowing and "cooperating" with the predominant trends in urban growth.

To some extent the same omission of the historical perspective is reflected in the contents and organization of the text. Director Woodbury's Preface makes reference to the need for study of the "underlying factors in urban growth and development that, more or less directly, have helped to produce the problems now faced by redevelopment agencies". This objective takes form in the sections headed *Industrial Location and Redevelopment* by Mr. Woodbury and Frank Cliffe, Research Assistant to the Study, *Urban Redevelopment and the Urbanite* by William S. Slayton, Assistant Director of National Association of Housing Officials, and Richard Dewey, Associate Professor of Sociology at the University of Illinois; and *Local Government Organization in Metropolitan Areas: Its Relation to Urban Redevelopment*, by Victor Jones, author of a test on metropolitan government and professor of government at Wesleyan University. There is much of interest and value in these weighty chapters. In particular, I appreciated the following: a discussion on the variations in locational tendencies of different classes of industry, of durable capital goods as compared with nondurable consumer goods, etc.; the comprehensive but condensed report on opinion surveys conducted in centres across the United States on such questions as ownership or tenancy, multiple and/or single family dwellings, inter- and intra-community migration, and the home-work relationship; and Victor Jones' catalogue and criticism of the different type of solutions—those involving both limited and fundamental change in the structure of local government—attempted or advocated as remedies for metropolitan problems of coordination of utility systems, of justice in taxation and equality in service, and of democratic political organization.

While these words are fine in themselves I do not believe they are sufficiently integrated into the framework and objectives of the Study, particularly the declared objective of probing the causes of the deterioration which makes redevelopment necessary. To begin with, the three essays are not addressed to a common set of conditions. It would have helped if somewhere in the text there was a statement which represented the irreducible minimum of agreement amongst the Study participants on the basic problems which make redevelopment necessary, and which need illumination if redevelopment is to be successful. But there is no such statement and as a result the essays on underlying factors lack purpose in terms of the objectives of the Study. After wading through 503 pages I still felt, with Mr. Woodbury, that "one of the weakest points in the theory and practice of urban planning is the insufficient attention given to processes of growth, development, decline, and

decay in cities". For example, I was no wiser about what surely must be a crucial question for a study devoted to redevelopment, namely—what are the fundamental causes of urban blight? To answer the question properly, a study of land-use tendencies in a representative group of American cities would have been found necessary and from that may have emerged some very useful guides to integrated research.

The part of the Study dealing with the operative problems of redevelopment will, I feel, be widely appreciated—particularly the article by William H. Ludlow, consultant to the Puerto Rico Planning Board, on *Urban Densities and Their Costs*. The core of his analysis revolves around the relationship between the cost of housing and the cost of public services at carrying population densities. And he is able to demonstrate that what is optimum for the housing project is not necessarily optimum for the utility and road system—and that the redevelopment agency considering over-all economy must choose a density on the basis of both costs. Of particular interest were the comments on the "journey to work". Ludlow suggests that "the most efficient method to reduce traffic peak and traffic flow in general would be to locate places of work and of business to the greatest extent feasible within walking distance of homes for their workers".

The Edmonton data, which shows a tendency for industrial employees to minimize the distance between home and work place (e.g. in one area 54% of employees live within 1¼ miles of the employment centre), provides some evidence that the suggested policy has a sound basis in the locational trends of workers' housing.

Considered altogether, the *Urban Redevelopment Study* is a useful piece of work, informative but somewhat lacking in inspiration—and somewhat inclined to match its monumental budget with excessive and monumental bulk.

LEONARD GERTLER

A RIVER VALLEY. Eliot River, P.E.I. *National Parks Service Photo*

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